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DE RUEHAC #0175 0471453
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R 161453Z FEB 06
FM AMEMBASSY ASUNCION
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3778
INFO RUCNMR/MERCOSUR COLLECTIVE
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 0493
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 0122
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEABND/DEA HQS WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RUMIAAA/USCINCSO MIAMI FL//SCJ3/SCJ33/SCJ34/SOCSCO LNO//
RHEHNSC/WHITE HOUSE NSC WASHDC

UNCLAS ASUNCION 000175

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/BSC AND INL FOR ABBY SMITH
NSC FOR SUE CRONIN
SOUTHCOM FOR POLAD BARBARA MOORE
NAIROBI FOR MICHAEL FITZPATRICK

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SNAR](#) [KCRM](#) [PGOV](#) [PA](#)

SUBJECT: BRAZILIANS RECORD PARAGUAYAN MILITARY OFFICIAL
WARNING NARCOTRAFFICKER

¶11. (SBU) SUMMARY: On February 7, a Paraguayan newspaper reported that Paraguayan military officials detained Lt. Colonel Felix Caceres, after his telephone conversation warning a wanted drug trafficker in the Pedro Juan Caballero area of future anti-drug activities was taped by Brazilian Federal Police. The trafficker, Erineu Domingo Soligo, aka "Pingo," has ties to the FARC and is a known arms/drugs trafficker. Military authorities took Felix Caceres into custody and plan to hold a hearing after an investigation is conducted. A DEA source claimed the military official had been warning traffickers in the region of SENAD counterdrug activities for some time, including providing information to extradited trafficker Ivan Mendes Mesquita prior to his arrest. END SUMMARY.

¶12. (SBU) Paraguayan news daily, La Nacion, reported on February 7 that Brazilian Federal Police recorded Paraguayan military Lieutenant Colonel Jose Felix Caceres warning Erineu Domingo Soligo, aka "Pingo," that members of the National Anti-Drug Secretariat (SENAD) would be operating in the area soon. (Note: Brazilian Federal Police routinely record traffickers' conversations using Brazilian cellphones along the Paraguay/Brazil border as part of joint counterdrug operations called "Operation Alianza" conducted between the two countries. End Note.) After the story was reported by the press, officials took Felix Caceres into custody and transferred him to the Vinas Cue military prison near Asuncion. He will be held in that facility until his case is presented before a military tribunal. According to Defense Attache information, military officials in Asuncion know little about Felix Caceres, as there are so many lieutenant colonels in the military, that he would not fall on their radar screen often. The officials admit that working in the region is difficult, as narcotraffickers often tempt officers with large bribes. However, the officials told the DATT that the hearing will take into account all evidence of the case before making a decision on his involvement, and they presume Felix Caceres is innocent until proven guilty by a military court.

¶13. (SBU) According to DEA officials, Felix Caceres had been providing information about upcoming operations to traffickers operating in the Pedro Juan Caballero region for some time, including extradited trafficker Ivan Mendes

Mesquita. DEA reports that in November-December 2005, Felix Caceres routinely asked Paraguayan Special Forces officers working with SENAD specific questions about upcoming activities in the region, presumably to warn Pingo and other traffickers.

¶4. (SBU) Pingo, a Brazilian listed on SENAD's "most wanted" campaign, is a known narcotics and arms trafficker with connections to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). According to DEA information, Pingo owns several ranches along the Brazil/Paraguay border and enjoys protection by members of the Paraguayan National Police and the military. DEA Paraguay office notes that Pingo has escaped SENAD's operations in the past by fleeing through extensive tunnels dug from his ranches into the countryside. It is likely that he was warned by Felix Caceres through local police and military officials.

¶5. (SBU) COMMENT: While most of the Paraguayan newspapers covered the story, the coverage by ABC Color reports that Felix Caceres is being framed to appear that he is aiding the narcotics traffickers in the region. DEA information suggests that the Pedro Juan Caballero-based ABC reporter, Candido Figueiredo, is on the payroll of traffickers and routinely reports false information to protect trafficking operations in the area. END COMMENT.

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